



# Environmental News



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## **State, Federal, Local and Tribal Agencies Partners in Cleanup Project**

The completed cleanup at the former Parawax Oil Reclaimer site in Oklahoma City will be marked Friday by the federal, state, tribal and local government agencies who were partners in the cleanup. An unusual collaboration of groups that normally might not participate in an environmental cleanup made rapid redevelopment viable.

Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Mary Fallin said, "Oklahoma is working hard with its federal, state, local and tribal partners to keep our economic opportunities growing. Making this site viable again is an example of what we can achieve for the people of Oklahoma when we work together."

Many contaminated sites are cleaned up only to the level where they don't pose off-site risks to human health or the environment. Resources, potential access, and site conditions all play into cleanup decisions. For example, at an isolated site, cleanup may be complete when contamination is capped in place and the site is fenced to prevent access.

In this case, a coalition of groups came together before the cleanup began to set a different goal. The local community, tribal representatives, and city, state and federal agencies worked together to make productive reuse possible.

For example, the state of Oklahoma identified the Parawax site as a priority for cleanup and referred it to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for further action. This allowed EPA to bring approximately \$2.5 million in federal resources to the site in cooperation with the U.S. Coast Guard's Oil Pollution Act program.

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When the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority (NACEA) expressed an interest in redeveloping the site, the Oklahoma City Planning Commission modified its land use plan, and EPA established cleanup levels, to support the city and NACEA's goals.

"This property will not sit fenced and idle. Because of the extensive cooperation in this cleanup, not only has the soil been cleaned, the stigma of contamination has been replaced with the promise of business opportunities. It will be returned to productive use -- to rebuilding, to the tax rolls, and to the job market," EPA Regional Administrator Gregg Cooke said.

The site is near Oklahoma City's Bricktown Revitalization area and overlooking the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority's proposed world-class Native American Cultural Center.

Oklahoma City Mayor Kirk Humphreys said, "Oklahoma City is committed to revitalizing underused inner city neighborhoods and bringing them back into productivity. We are pleased to have help from partners at many levels with compatible goals."

Tommy Thompson, Executive Director of the NACEA, said, "This site, now healed, will play an important role in the future of the Native American Cultural Center. We hope to bring development in to complement the tremendous view of the future Cultural Center and Museum, downtown Oklahoma City and Bricktown."

The Parawax site operated as a reclaimer of oilfield wastes from 1942 until 1997, when the Oklahoma Corporation Commission ordered its closure citing environmental violations.

EPA's investigation found 26 above ground storage tanks in poor condition, containing roughly half a million gallons of oil, oily water and sludge. The oily wastes and more than 25,000 cubic yards of contaminated soils were removed and properly disposed off-site.

More information on the Parawax cleanup is available on the Internet at [www.epa.gov/region6/superfund](http://www.epa.gov/region6/superfund).

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